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THE GIRL FROM **U.N.C.L.E.** MAGAZINE

DECEMBER, 1967

Vol. 2, No. 1

A NEW COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

THE SINISTER SATELLITE AFFAIR

by ROBERT HART DAVIS

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High over the earth THRUSH had unleashed the most ghastly weapon ever to threaten mankind, as April, Mark, Solo and Illya raced against minutes to find an orbiting atom bomb, targeted to destroy the world!

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THE MOONLIGHTER

He watched the store. Six customers. Then three. Soon there would be only one. His hand felt the gun. Soon it would be the time . . .

by Jack Ritchie

ED CERVIC stepped behind the magazine racks and checked the snub-nosed thirty-eight once again. It almost slipped from his damp hand as he put it back.

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He moved slightly to the left and his eyes went over the interior of Larson's Drugstore.

Ten minutes ago there had been six customers. Now there were just three: the elderly woman peering at the shelf of patent medicines, the young punk eyeing the pipe displays, and the girl in her twenties leafing through the greeting cards.

And Larson. At the cash register filling out some kind of an order form.

How would he react? Cervic wondered. Would he get hysterical? Maybe faint? Sometimes they did that. Or would he try to be a hero?

There was no way to tell beforehand. Cervic wiped his right hand on the side of his trouser leg.

Larson looked his way.

Cervic picked up a magazine at random and opened it. One of those things about automobiles.

Automobiles.

Cervic smiled grimly. What a lemon he got for himself. Only two years old and already he had to have a new transmission put in. Three hundred and sixty bucks. And then last month a new battery and a generator practically at the same time. Another fifty-six bucks.

And then that damn thermostat.

Ed Cervic swore softly.

And still making payments on the car. Had to go to the bank for re-financing after the transmission conked out. It sure played hell with the budget.

How the devil did other people

manage to get along on their salaries?

The answer was that they didn't.

His brother-in-law, a teacher, what he earned wasn't enough. Evenings and weekends he drove a taxi. And Cervic's neighbor, Charley. He worked for the post office from eight to five. And after that he tended bar.

Ed Cervic swore again.

That damn thermostat was the last straw. Until then he'd just about been able to get by.

His eyes went over the store.

The old lady was gone. Good. But the punk and the young girl were still there.

Larson was at the phone. He looked Cervic's way.

Cervic put the magazine back on the shelf and pulled a newspaper from the wire rack. His fingers made wet marks on the edges of the paper as he turned to the local news.

He read the article again.

Always drugstores.

Why not drugstores? Cervic thought. If you got something good going there's no sense in taking chances with something new and new problems.

His lips twitched slightly as he read the description. At least everybody agreed on that. Medium height, medium weight, medium brown hair. In his thirties. Slipped a handkerchief over his face when he pulled the job.

Seven drugstores so far.

Always in the same neighborhood. Always between five-thirty and six-thirty in the evenings.

Ed Cervic smiled tightly.

Maybe he's got a job and he can't get off until five. Maybe he's just a poor slob who can't stretch the pay check far enough. Maybe he's got just enough time to rob a drugstore before he catches the subway home.

Cervic looked up at the wall clock. A quarter after six.

He had to be home by seven-thirty. Madge would be waiting with supper.

His eyes covered the store again. The young punk was gone now. Just the girl left. And Larson was waiting on her.

The front door swished open softly and Cervic stiffened at the sight of the blue uniform.

Damn, he thought, damn.

Obviously a rookie. One of those big smart young ones. One of the kind that could mess up everything.

Cervic turned a page of the newspaper. He took a deep breath and waited.

The cop stared at him for a few seconds and then went towards the door. He left.

Ed Cervic exhaled.

The young girl took her thin paper bag of greeting cards and stepped out into the street.

Just him and Larson in the store now.

Twenty-five after six. He put the newspaper back in the rack.

He felt his heart begin to pound. The handkerchief.

CAPTAIN HARRISON was pleased. "We staked out twelve places in the neighborhood and figured he was bound to bite at one of them. Turns out he's just some poor sucker who's having trouble with his finances at home."

Larson poured himself something from a bottle. "When he walked in here with that handkerchief over his face, I almost fainted."

"Did you have any trouble?" Harrison asked.

Ed Cervic shook his head. "No, Captain. I guess I was just about as scared as he was, but when I called out, he dropped the gun."

Harrison grinned. "I remember how nervous I was on my first stake-out, Ed. But you get used to it after a few times."

Cervic's eyes went to the clock again. All this was taking time. He'd probably have to phone Madge and tell her that he was skipping supper.

She wouldn't like that, but he had to get to Mario's Service Station before nine.

If Harrison ever found out, Ed Cervic stood a good chance of getting kicked off the force. Filling gas tanks and wiping windshields wasn't exactly what a cop should be doing off-duty, but damn it, nowadays you *had* to moonlight to make ends meet.

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